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## Family Physicians Advise on the Dangers of Using Inhalants

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Inhalants are substances that are sniffed or huffed to give the user an immediate rush or high.

Inhalants include glues, paint thinners, dry cleaning fluids, gasoline, felt-tip marker fluid, hair spray, deodorants, spray paint and whipped cream dispensers.

Substances are inhaled directly from the container (called sniffing or snorting), from a plastic bag (called bagging) or by holding an inhalant-soaked rag in the mouth (called huffing).

“Inhalant use is a serious problem and is getting worse,” said Suellywn Stewart, M.D., a family physician in Westerville, Ohio. “Data suggests that over 1 million people between 10-17 years of age have used inhalants, an increase of 158 percent between 1990-99.”

Inhalants produce a quick feeling of being drunk followed by sleepiness, staggering, dizziness and confusion. Long-time users get headaches, nosebleeds and sometimes lose their sense of smell. Inhalants decrease oxygen to the brain and can cause brain damage.

Although inhalants can be found around the house, they are so bad for you that using them, even one time, can kill you.

Signs of use include spots or sores around the mouth; paint or stains on the body, clothing, rags or bags; and red or runny eyes or nose. Users also suffer withdrawal symptoms that include hallucinations, nausea and headaches.

“A physician may suspect inhalant abuse if a teen complains of episodic dizziness, nausea and/or vomiting and no other reason can be found,” said Stewart. “Parents may notice behavioral changes including impaired judgment, belligerence, apathy, irritability and depression,” continued Stewart.

Treatment facilities are rare and hard to find. Because users have a high rate of relapse, 30-40 days of detoxification are required and follow-up treatment is very important.

If you know or suspect someone is abusing inhalants, contact your family physician to seek help.

“Contact the National Inhalant Prevention Coalition, your local alcohol, drug and mental health center or your local hospital for help finding a treatment facility,” said Stewart.

*The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,400 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.*

## FACT SHEET

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### **Family Physicians Advise on the Dangers of Using Inhalants**

#### **Common Potential Inhalants**

- Glue
- Paint products
- Gasses
- Nail polish remover
- Lighter fluid
- Hair spray
- Cleaning agents
- Fire extinguishers

#### **Signs of Inhalant Use**

- Paint or stains on the body, clothing, rags or bags
- Unusual breath odor or chemical odor on clothing
- Slurred or disorientated speech
- Anxiety, excitability, irritability or restlessness
- Missing household items
- Red or runny eyes or nose
- Spots or sores around the mouth
- Drunk, dazed or dizzy appearance
- Nausea, loss of appetite

#### **Inhalant Withdraw Symptoms**

- Hallucinations
- Nausea
- Excessive sweating
- Muscle cramps
- Headaches
- Chills

Sources: [www.familydoctor.org](http://www.familydoctor.org)

*National Inhalant Prevention Coalition  
Partnership for a Drug-Free America*